



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## MENTAL MUMMIES.

IF we should name the most important factor in the changes which have gradually widened the contrast between modern science and the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, we might define it as a “progressive recognition of hereditary influences.”

There was a time when each individual of the human race was considered a separate accident, called into existence by an act of unlimited, arbitrary power, and apt to be as suddenly changed, even unto a complete inversion of his former moral being, by a merciful, or revengeful, caprice of the same power.

Biology has since taught us to apply the doctrine of evolution to the problems of our own moral and physical nature, to trace the tendencies of bygone times to their effects in the present age, to consider individuals the outcome of a long series of precedent influences, and to recognise the truth that the length of those influences is proportioned to the persistence of the result.

Intelligent statesmen were the first to appreciate the practical value of those facts. The advisers of Alexander II. did not waste their time in a hopeless attempt to convert the freedom-worshipping natives of the Caucasus into devotees of Muscovite despotism, but at once confronted them with the alternative of exile or death. Our Indian commissioners early realised the impossibility of turning the descendants of a long ancestry of deer-hunters into tillers of the soil, and transferred the survivors of the long race-war to a territory where they could for better or worse, indulge their incurable penchant. The Groot Fontein penitentiary of the Transvaal Republic became the grave of so many Caffirs that the managers at last abandoned the plan of inuring nomads to the restraints of sedentary occupation,

and saved the lives, if not the souls of their convicts by sending them about in chain-gangs to mend the irrigation ditches of the border settlements.

Hereditary influences cannot be obliterated by force of rhetoric or of government edicts and it would solve many riddles if we would apply that principle to phenomena of ethical and religious evolution. How else shall we explain the fact that in less than sixty years the doctrine of Protestantism spread from central Germany to the highland hamlets of Scotland and Scandinavia, while in Spain, Portugal, and Italy a very decided progress in general intelligence has failed to lead to a similar result? How shall we account for the success of Christian missionaries in Tasmania and Otaheiti and their utter failure in Burmah and Hindostan? How for the persecution-proof vitality of Judaism, the ready collapse of Mormonism, or the revival of crass mystic delusions in the midst of our realistic civilisation?

There is no doubt that the average Spanish sailor, or village-shopkeeper of to-day possesses a larger stock of general information than the average Brunswick school-teacher of the sixteenth century. Yet one of the least learned of those school-teachers could, by instinct, sufficiently appreciate the significance of the Protestant revolt to celebrate its triumph by a big bonfire and what our western friends would call a "grand war-dance," on a height near the little town of Wolfenbüttel. Why does Pedro Gonzales still cross himself at the mention of a heretic, while Peter Jansen would as soon return to the pig-sty hovels of the mediæval serfs as crawl back under the yoke of Jesuitry? How could the bogs of foggy Ireland and the vegas of sunny Spain nourish equally imperishable roots of a plant that failed to get a firm foothold in the sands of Brandenburg?

The solution of those enigmas can be found in the circumstance that the doctrine of anti-naturalism had extended its influence to the character of many European nations, and that the character-traits of a race are less amenable to rapid changes than its intellectual standards. On the soul-organism of the Latin races the thousand years influence of monastic tyranny has left traces which the light of science will fail to efface for centuries to come. The propaganda

of a manlier creed has thus been defeated, not only by their ignorance, but by their aversion to mental efforts, by their habitual reliance on miracles, by their incurable indifference to the claims of truth and the merits of intellectual independence, by their hereditary mistrust in the competence of their natural instinct. To their moral palate a doctrine which nauseates their northern neighbors has become a pleasant narcotic; they have been forced to swallow the opium of pessimism till a craving for the repetition of the mind-enervating dose has become a second nature; they hug the cross that has proved a symbol of death to their noblest reformers.

Against that influence of perverted instincts the logic of mental revelations avails but little. "Propositions which would appear self-evident to certain mental constitutions," says Dr. Carpenter, "are apt to be very differently received by others, according to their conformity or discordance with that *aggregate of preformed opinion* which has grown up in the minds of each. For just as we try whether a new piece of furniture which is offered us does or does not fit into a certain recess in our apartment, and accept or decline it accordingly, so we try a new proposition which is offered to our mental acceptance. If it either at once fits in or can by argument or discussion be brought to fit in to some recess in our fabrics of thought, we give our assent to it by admitting it to its appropriate place. But if it neither fits in the first instance nor can by any means be brought to fit, the mind automatically rejects it."

It is true that logical demonstrations may become complete enough to defy dissent, but even from facts which force themselves upon the acceptance of every rational human being, different individuals will draw widely different inferences. That the mind of man may become a receptacle for irreconcilable doctrines is strikingly illustrated by the simultaneous acceptance of the Old and New Testament of our heterogeneous scripture, and in the same way obstinate bigots manage to associate scientific truth and dogmatic absurdities. Darwin and Moses may occupy adjoining quarters in the fabric of the same cosmogony; the rule of three may become a passive concomitant of Trinitarian dogmas. The torch of truth may be permitted to flicker in a secluded recess of souls which refuse it the

privilege of throwing its rays in certain directions. Education may fail to reclaim hereditary bigotry. In the winter of 1559 the rabble of Madrid assembled to witness the death of Don Carlos de Seso, a Spanish nobleman whose ancestors had fought at Granada and Toledo. His brother had been the favorite hunting-companion of Charles V. ; one of his uncles had sacrificed his life in deciding the victory of Pavia ; Don Carlos himself had acquired renown both as a soldier and a scholar, but in the latter capacity he had confessed his sympathy with certain doctrines of Martin Luther, and the Holy Inquisition had sentenced him to anticipate his doom in the flames of the stake. King Philip II. honored the *auto da fé* with his presence, and frowned in a way which the condemned freethinker mistook for a disapproval of his sentence. "O King! can you thus witness the torture of your subjects?" exclaimed De Seso. "Deliver us from so cruel a death which even our enemies admit we have not deserved." "I would help carrying faggots to burn my own son," replied the King, "if he had incurred your unspeakable guilt." Yet Philip the Second was one of the best-educated princes of his century. In mathematics, astronomy, ancient and modern languages, geography, and history, he was far better informed than Landgraf Philip of Hessen, who would have risked his own life to save that of a loyal cavalier.

There are mental mummies who cannot be revived by removing their grave-shrouds and clothing them in modern drapery ; the principle of conservatism has penetrated their very veins and the marrow of their bones. It is by no means unconceivable that a popular leader like Garibaldi or Porfirio Diaz should succeed in persuading a million of his countrymen to renounce the yoke of Rome and build Protestant chapels, but the result would be largely limited to a change of nomenclature. Before long the dissenters would march in procession with a wonder-working tooth of John Wesley or kiss a shred from the petticoat of the Holy Maid of Kent. They would groan at the mention of Rome, but exorcise spooks with the initials of Ulric Zwingli, and abstain from work on the anniversary of every Protestant martyr. They would try to redeem drunkards by sprinkling them with consecrated water from the holy rivers of Kansas,

and celebrate Arbor Day only by invoking the spirit of Prof. G. P. Marsh, as a patron-saint of climate-improving forests. Under the stimulus of industrial influences, they might transfer the cross from way-side shrines to telegraph-poles, but they would persist in the worship of sorrow.

The creed which has turned the happiest countries of our globe into a grave of their former prosperity, is a medley of miraculism and anti-naturalism, and the experience of the last century has proved that both can survive the repudiation of Rome and even of Galilee. The mania of renunciation, after the abolishment of monasteries and nunneries, continued its dismal rites in Quaker-garb and Shaker temples of celibacy. The miracle-hunger of millions who have learned to scorn the clumsy tricks of the cowled exorcist, gratifies its appetite in the mystic gloom of the dark cabinet. Rustic supernaturalists, deprived of such luxuries, indemnify themselves by retailing the marvels of the serpent-charm and joint-snake superstition.

A curious psychological problem suggests itself in the question how far the charm of the "sour-grape philosophy" may contribute to the persistence of certain forms of moral nihilism. Condemned criminals almost invariably "renounce the vanities" of a life which the Court of Appeals has refused to save, and in a scaffold-speech, quoted in Galignani's *Messenger* of May 6th, 1837, the English murderer Joseph Greenacre expressed his conviction that his crime had been the means of saving his soul, because "death on the gibbet was one of the surest passports to heaven."

For similar reasons degenerate nations, after realising the doom of their national welfare, are apt to renounce the glory of a forfeited world, and to consider misery, poverty, and shame so many stepping-stones to the bliss of a better life beyond the grave. After habitual sins against the health-laws of nature have avenged themselves in cureless diseases, decrepit bigots may find solace even in that most insane tenet of their dualistic creed which teaches them to despise the body as the enemy of the soul.

A natural effect of pessimism may thus, in course of time, become one of its perpetuating causes.

FELIX L. OSWALD.